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Review of the achievements in the implementation and results of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s

Renewal of commitment and future action for children in the next decade

Letter dated 18 December 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

With a view to participating positively in the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Yokohama, Japan, from 17 to 20 December 2001, the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco hosted the Arab-African Forum on this subject in Rabat from 24 to 26 October 2001.

In this regard, I have the honour to bring to your attention the Declaration of the Forum, held under the presidency of H.R.H. Princess Lalla Maryam, Personal Representative of His Majesty the King, to the special session on children (see annex).

This document contains the integral text of the Declaration of the Rabat Arab-African Forum against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, adopted by the Arab-African countries which attended that meeting.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the Declaration circulated as a document of the twenty-severth special session of the General Assembly on children, scheduled for May 2002.

(*Signed*) Mohamed **Bennouna**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 18 December 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic and French]

The Arab-African Forum against Sexual Exploitation of Children was held in Rabat from 24 to 26 October 2001, under the honorary presidency of H.R.H. Princess Lalla Maryam, with a view to making preparations for the effective participation of the Arab-African region in the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, to be held in Yokohama, Japan, from 17 to 20 December 2001. The Rabat meeting set as its principal objectives:

- To reiterate the political commitment of States made at Stockholm;
- To draw up the balance sheet for the five years following the Stockholm World Congress of 1996;
- To identify good practices in the fields of the prevention and combating of sexual exploitation of children;
- To draw up strategies for intervention taking account of regional specificities and priorities for the effective combating of the scourge of sexual exploitation of children, including commercial exploitation;
- To make a regional contribution to the implementation of the Stockholm recommendations by according particular attention to Arab and African specificities and priorities.

The balance sheet of the five post-Stockholm years for the countries of the region highlights the following problems:

- The subject of sexual exploitation is still taboo in many countries;
- The inadequacy of research and the lack of mechanisms for the compilation of qualitative and quantitative data at both the local and the regional levels;
- The absence of a multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach and of mechanisms for coordination in the prevention and combating of sexual exploitation of children;
- The inadequacy or non-existence:
  - of training for judicial, police, accommodation and transport personnel and training in the social, medical, paramedical, educational and media professions;
  - of parental care and supervision;
- Shortages of programmes and structures for the rehabilitation and reintegration of children who are victims of sexual exploitation;
- The basic causes of this scourge remain, inter alia, poverty, illiteracy and the inadequacy of educational systems, gender discrimination, cultural practices prejudicial to women and children, uncontrolled social changes and crises in human values;

- A large number of the countries of the region are still victims of armed conflicts, civil wars, military occupation, embargoes, abductions and the taking hostage of children, engendering situations of violence and greater vulnerability favouring sexual exploitation of children;
- Sexual exploitation of children is a factor in the spread of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, as well as other physical and psychological ailments;
- The negative effects of globalization and the misuse of new information technologies are aggravating factors in the situation with regard to sexual exploitation of children.

We, the participants in the Forum, recall the following:

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the principal instrument for the protection and promotion of the rights of the child;
- The Rabat Arab-African Forum comes within the framework of the Global Movement for Children and the preparations for the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on children and within the series of other regional events on the subject of child welfare, such as the Arab Civil Society Forum (15-19 February 2001); the African First Ladies Summit on the Girl Child (Marrakesh, Morocco, 20-22 April 2001); the Arab-African Ministerial Conference on Finance (Marrakesh, Morocco, 21-23 May 2001); the Pan-African Forum on the Future of Children (Cairo, 28-31 May 2001); the Arab High-level Conference on the Rights of the Child (2-4 July 2001); and the thirty-sixth interparliamentary session (Ouagadougou, 9-13 September 2001), which brought together elements from various spheres (governmental, private sector and international, parliamentary and children's organizations) and provided opportunities for exchanges of ideas to promote the protection of the rights of the child and respect for the dignity of children;
- This meeting comes within the framework of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict, as well as International Labour Organization Convention 182 concerning the elimination of the worst forms of child labour and the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol for the prevention, suppression and punishment of trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

Considering the appreciable advances made in recent years, including:

- Political leadership at the highest level in the various regions;
- The existence of outlines of national plans of action in certain countries and gradually increasing awareness of the subject;
- The adherence of the Governments of the States of the region to the commitments made at Stockholm and their determination to become further involved in the Yokohama process;
- The growing involvement of national and international non-governmental organizations: ECPAT International, the Non-Governmental Organizations

Group for the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other competent non-governmental organizations;

- The mobilization of children and youth in the promotion and defence of the rights of the child;

- The progressive generalization of the harmonization of national legislation with the Convention on the Rights of the Child with a view, in particular, to depenalizing and protecting the victims and criminalizing the act of sexual exploitation and its perpetrators;

- The recognition by all participants of the existence of this scourge, which requires commitment on the part of all,

We recommend that our Governments:

- Ratify and implement the provisions of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, namely the Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, as well as International Labour Organization Convention 182 on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour and Recommendation 190 on the prohibition of the worst forms of child labour;

- Harmonize the text of national laws in accordance with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ensure their implementation and follow-up;

- Adopt legal provisions aimed at protecting children against all forms of sexual exploitation, in particular sexual tourism and pornography;

- Plan and support the establishment of a national monitoring centre in countries where there is none and regional monitoring centres for the combating of sexual exploitation of children;

- Continue the activities already undertaken, namely:

  - situational analysis and studies, investigations and research on the issue of sexual exploitation of children;

  - consciousness-raising and education of adults and children on the rights of the child and on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in particular as it relates to the girl child, as well as on the problems of children with special needs, with a view to changing attitudes and behaviour patterns so as to prevent the scourge;

- Develop strategies and mechanisms to encourage the participation of children and adolescents in protecting and defending themselves better, particularly in the field of education for family life;

- Involve the travel agencies and tourism ministries of the various countries in programmes to combat sexual exploitation of children;

- Ensure reinforced control at the level of security services, particularly at frontiers;

- Promote education for peace in order to prevent armed conflicts and combat poverty so as to prevent the proliferation and practice of sexual exploitation;

- Promote the "child-friendly, gender-sensitive school" strategy;
- Put in place machinery for the compilation, registration, processing and dissemination of quantitative and qualitative data at the level of the competent departments: judicial and parajudicial, health, education, social, etc.;
- Strengthen interministerial coordination within the framework of an adequate response to the cross-sectoral character of the problems of sexual exploitation of children;
- Strengthen partnership with the United Nations system, international institutions and organizations, non-governmental organizations, national and international associations, parliaments and the private sector.

We recommend that the Governments, non-governmental organizations, associations and private sectors of the countries of the region:

- Encourage and support the creation of national and regional networks to combat sexual exploitation of children, directed, in particular at potential exploiters;
- Promote the participation of children with a view to learning more about the phenomenon and possible responses;
- Support the carrying out of studies, investigations and research on sexual exploitation of children and ensure the dissemination of their results at the national and regional levels;
- Organize information, education and communication campaigns on the subject aimed at families, youth, elected local officials and opinion, family and community leaders;
- Introduce the sexual exploitation component systematically in situational analyses of children and women and all other topical studies;
- Enact legislative provisions making it obligatory for citizens to notify the judicial and police authorities of any alleged case of sexual assault concerning children.